Title: The Development of Mental Model of Sharing Behavior in Preschool Children

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Abstract: 1.28

Sharing behavior is a common prosocial behavior for preschool children emerging within the first 2 years of life. However, it is still not clear that how the behavior and mind mechanism continue to develop after their emergence. In this study, we investigated eighty-eight 3- to 6-year-old children’s sharing behavior and mental model development through the revised dictator game and the interview. Revised dictator game includes four questions: 1) If you have ten cookies, how many cookies will you give to another person; 2) Can you guess, if somebody has ten cookies, how many cookies will he/she give you; 3) How many cookies will he/she accept if they are given by another person; 4) If another person gives you cookies, how many do you think you will accept. What’s more, the interview was conducted to measuring the children’s understanding of sharing behavior, and the strategies when they make decision to share.

The results showed that: 1) children's sharing behavior has significant difference in age but not in gender, and post-hoc Bonferroni test showed that there was a significant difference between 4-year-old (x=3.28, SD=0.42) and 5-year-old (x=5.33, SD=2.92) children’s sharing behavior; 2) children show more sharing behavior than expectation other's sharing behavior(t=3.288, p<0.05), however, there was no significant difference between actual behavior and expectation based on the reciprocity; 3) all children know that “sharing” means “giving thing to others”; 4) 3-4 years old children couldn’t understand what strategies were, while 4-6 years old children use “tit to tat” and “fair distribution” strategies. In sum, the transition period of sharing behavior is between 4 and 5 years old; and children may have had the same sharing behavior pattern as adults; thirdly, 4 years old children could use strategies to share with others. These results help to understand how the behavior and mind mechanism of sharing develop during the preschool period.